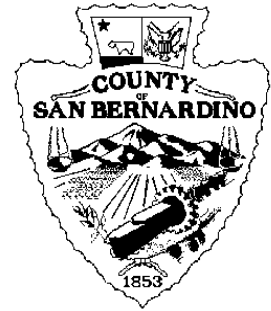


NEWS

From the County of San Bernardino

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Public invited to comment on West Mojave Plan in Victorville

The people of San Bernardino County will have a second opportunity to be heard on plans to manage 6.4 million acres of public and private lands within the California Desert Conservation Area, which takes in portions of San Bernardino, Los Angeles, Kern, and Inyo counties.

A "scoping" meeting to assist San Bernardino County and Kern County planners in the development of an environmental impact report on the West Mojave Plan will be held from **7 to 9 p.m.** on Wednesday, **February 5, 2003**, in the **Victorville City Council Chambers**, 14343 Civic Drive in Victorville. The first meeting in the county occurred on January 16 in Redlands.

"Although a hearing was held in Redlands, I thought it would be appropriate to add an additional public hearing on the West Mojave Plan within the actual plan area," said First District Supervisor Bill Postmus. "I asked for a hearing in my district, so I'm glad to now see that this hearing will take place in Victorville. It will help bring the process closer to desert residents, who would ultimately be most affected by the plan."

West Mojave Plan, which can be viewed at <http://www.ca.blm.gov/cdd/wemo.html>, addresses the management of 3.6 million acres of public lands administered by the U.S. Bureau of Land Management and 2.8 million acres of private lands. The plan is being prepared collaboratively with local, state and federal agencies, and will serve as a habitat conservation plan for the area.

The habitat conservation plan will essentially allow significant portions of land to be used for economic development and recreation while other parcels are set aside for wildlife. The plan will include conservation strategies for the desert tortoise, Mojave ground squirrel and other sensitive desert plants and animals, a motorized vehicle access network for public lands in the region, and multiple use issues such as livestock grazing, mining, cultural resources, and recreation.

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The environmental impact report will assess the environmental impacts of a proposed action and a range of reasonable alternatives, including what would happen if no action is taken.

The San Bernardino County Land Use Services Department and Kern County Planning Department are co-coordinating the development of the environmental impact report for the West Mojave Plan. A Draft EIR is scheduled for release in the spring of 2003. The Draft EIR will be made available for public review and comment.

In addition to being available on the Internet, the West Mojave Plan is available in the San Bernardino County and Kern County planning offices.

The February 5 meeting will provide an opportunity for agencies and the public to comment on the scope and content of the EIR. You may also send comments regarding this EIR directly to the counties. The public comment period on the Notice of Preparation has been extended to February 10, 2003. Comments may be sent to:

County of San Bernardino
Land Use Services Department
Attention: Randy Scott
385 North Arrowhead Avenue
San Bernardino, CA 92415-0182

In addition to being available on the Internet, the West Mojave Plan is available in the San Bernardino County and Kern County planning offices.